

Merit Badge College Policies and Procedures

- The Guide to Advancement section 3.0.0.1 establishes the Council Advancement Committee's (CAC) responsibilities to "Establish local practices for adhering to National Council advancement procedures at outdoor programs, summer camp, and events such as merit badge fairs or midways."
- The Council Advancement Committee has determined and approved these following policies and procedures to conduct a Merit Badge College or Camporee. A Merit Badge College or Camporee is defined as a planned and organized standalone event (not part of a District or Council Camporee) with the intent to offer one or more merit badge opportunities under the direction of more than one merit badge counselor to Scouts from 3 or more Scouting units. This policy specifically applies to current Merit Badge Colleges and Camporees (Newville/Conococheague, East Shore/Keystone Capital, STEM/Pioneer, Carlisle/Troop 168, Troop 90 Merit Badge Camporee) including any future iterations and to new events meeting the same criteria. This policy and procedure does not apply to a single merit badge counselor offering a single merit badge to Scouts from more than one unit.
 - Examples:
 - A merit badge counselor wishing to offering a single merit badge to the Scouts in his unit and wanting to invite other units in the community may do so without having to submit a form.
 - More than one counselor organize an opportunity for more than one merit badge and choose to offer it to youth in 3 or more units would be required to follow this policy and submit an Application of Intent.

Goals:

- Fulfill the intent of the BSA merit badge program as outlined in the Guide to Advancement section 7.0.0.1 "There is more to merit badges than simply providing opportunities to learn skills. There is more to them than an introduction to lifetime hobbies, or the inspiration to pursue a career—though these invaluable results occur regularly. It all begins with a Scout's initial interest and effort in a merit badge subject, followed by a discussion with the unit leader or designated assistant, continues through meetings with a counselor, and culminates in advancement and recognition. It is an uncomplicated process that gives a Scout the confidence achieved through overcoming obstacles. Social skills improve. Self-reliance develops. Examples are set and followed. And fields of study and interest are explored beyond the limits of the school classroom."
- Ensure quality merit badge instruction from qualified merit badge counselors conforming to the Guide to Advancement section 7.0.1.0 about merit badge counselors and section 7.0.3.0 that outlines the process for counseling.
- Safeguard the integrity of the BSA advancement program. Merit badge events are foremost about the advancement experience and not a fundraising opportunity for a unit or other entity.

Registration:

- **Timeline:**
 - Merit Badge College Application of Intent submitted to the council advancement committee at least 180 days prior to the event. Applications submitted outside of this timeframe will be evaluated by the CAC as a special exception and are subject to denial.
 - The Event Budget must be submitted to the council service center staff at least 60 days prior to the event.
 - Merit Badge Registration Worksheet submitted to the council service center staff at least 60 days prior to the event.
 - This includes a list of merit badge counselors for the event.
 - Electronic Registration goes live at least 30 days prior to the event.
- The council service center staff will set up and handle all electronic registration through Tentaroo for each approved event.
- The Staff Advisor (District Professional) for the event will provide access to reports to the host of the event.
- The event chair or host will handle the registration for the day of the event.

All Concession Stands (or any provided Food Service):

- All concession stands are the responsibility of the organization running the stand. The organization must also adhere to all necessary applicable state and local laws.

Budget:

- **Merit Badge Colleges/ Camporees by design are not intended to generate revenue for the host, District, or Council. Budgets should be designed to cover cost of the event.**
- The definition of a formal budget is an estimate of income and expenditure for a set period of time.
- All event income and expenses will be managed by the council staff under the council's normal accounting processes (not including any concession sales, if offered).
- Staff Advisors will work with the chair to determine Tentaroo processing fees and appropriate credit card fees based on the cost of the event.
- Typical budget items may include, but are not limited to: Cost of registration, program supplies, office supplies, recognition items, facility rentals, bank processing fees, and electronic processing fees.
- **Merit Badge Colleges that do not charge a registration fee, it is understood that any expenses are incurred by the host and the New Birth of Freedom Council is not responsible for those expenses.**
- **Donations:**

- Physical Item donations for Merit Badge Colleges or Camporees are to be coordinated with the event Staff Advisor. A letter to use for businesses can be obtained from the event Staff Advisor. This letter is not to be used for general solicitation, but for specific needs that the event has.
- Monetary donations are governed by the unit money earning application process, which stipulates that units are not permitted to solicit contributions.

Promotion & Communication:

- These events must be coordinated with and listed on the online district and council calendar to avoid any date conflicts with other district or council events.
- Event chairs will be provided contact information for participants in the event and may share pertinent information about the event with the participants. Event chairs may share class roster and contact information with merit badge counselors.
- **At no time can the names of participants, contact information, or personally identifiable data may be published publicly or shared in mass.**

Advancement:

- **Merit Badge Counselor (See GTA 7.0.1.1 Qualifications of Counselors):**
 - All merit badge counselors will be verified that they are currently registered. The council service center staff will verify all in council merit badge counselors. The event chair or host will be responsible for verifying all out of council merit badge counselors. There must be enough merit badge counselors to service the number of participants and merit badges being offered. A list of merit badge counselors is available upon request.
- **Merit Badge Group Instruction (See GTA 7.0.3.2 Group Instruction):**
 - It is acceptable—and sometimes desirable—for merit badges to be taught in group settings. This often occurs at camp and merit badge midways, fairs, clinics, or similar events, and even online through webinars. These can be efficient methods, and interactive group discussions can support learning. Group instruction can also be attractive to “guest experts” assisting registered and approved counselors. Slide shows, skits, demonstrations, panels, and various other techniques can also be employed, but as any teacher can attest, not everyone will learn all the material. Because of the importance of individual attention and personal learning in the merit badge program, group instruction should be focused on those scenarios where the benefits are compelling.
 - There must be attention to each individual’s projects and fulfillment of all requirements as written. We must know that every Scout—actually and personally—completed them. If, for example, a requirement uses words like “show,” “demonstrate,” or “discuss,” then every Scout must do that. It is unacceptable to award badges on the basis of sitting in classrooms watching demonstrations, or remaining silent during discussions.
- **Youth Protection Training:**

- All merit badge counselors must have current youth protection training.
- All youth protection policies must be adhered to at the event.

- **Selection of Merit Badges:**
 - Merit Badges that are selected to occur at the event must be feasible to the proposed venue that they are occurring at.
 - Merit Badge class sizes are recommended to be no more than 10 participants to ensure each scout can meet all the merit badge requirements for the proposed badges. This is a guidance since some merit badges may require smaller class sizes, and some may be able to accommodate more.
 - Class times are recommended to be no more than 90 minutes to ensure each scout can meet all the merit badge requirements while holding the participants interest and attention.
 - All merit badge requirements must be completed as stated.
 - For Merit Badge Counselors seeking additional guidance on group instruction for merit badge classes please see GTA 7.0.3.2 Group Instruction.
 - **Pre-reqs:**
 - Any pre-requirements that need to be completed prior to the event need to be established on the registration worksheet in order to be placed in the online registration system.
 - Any pre-requirements need to be communicated to participants well in advance of the event. This can be achieved through email or posting on website.

Certificate of Insurance:

- If the location requires a certificate of insurance. One can be applied for through the council website this can found at <https://newbirthoffreedom.org/resources/request-for-certificate-of-liability-insurance/> .

Transportation:

- If transportation is being provided for during any part of the event, then the drivers need to provide proof that they have completed youth protection training and Pennsylvania State Clearances.
- All drivers will need to adhere to youth protection policies.
- If any part of your event involves transporting you to an offsite location to complete parts of a merit badge then you will need to make certain that all youth complete and submit a copy of BSA Activity Form.
 - This form can be found: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/19-673.pdf>

Registration Worksheet:

- All approved events must complete the Merit Badge College registration worksheet at least 60 days prior to the event.

After Action Report:

- An after-action report from the event chair needs to be submitted to the Council Advancement Committee within 30 days after the completion of the event. The report should include the following:
 - Scout and Merit Badge Counselor Surveys.
 - Example survey to use at your Merit Badge College. An electronic version is available upon request, please contact Council Advancement Committee Staff Advisor, Cory Kercher at cory.kercher@scouting.org
 - Total number of Attendees
 - Report on total number of completed and partial merit badges from the event.